

ESSAY XI.

ABOLITIONISM.*

USAGE often gives a comprehensive word a limited sense. If, in our day, and in this country, you ask a man whether he is an abolitionist, he will promptly answer no, though he may believe with Jefferson that slavery is the greatest curse that can be inflicted on a nation; or with Cassius M. Clay, that it is destructive of industry, the mother of ignorance, opposed to literature, antagonist to the fine arts, destructive of mechanical excellence; that it corrupts the people, retards population and wealth, impoverishes the soil, destroys national wealth, and is incompatible with constitutional liberty. A man may believe and say all this, as many of the wisest and best men of the South believe and openly avow, and yet be no abolitionist. If every man who regards slavery as an evil, and wishes to see it abolished, were an abolitionist, then nine tenths of the people of this country would be abolitionists. What then is an abolitionist? He is a man who holds that slaveholding is a great sin; and consequently that slaveholders should not be admitted to the communion of the church, and that slavery should immediately, under all circumstances, and regardless of all consequences, be abolished. "Slaveholding," says the second article of the American Anti-slavery Society, "is a heinous crime in the sight of God," and "ought therefore to be immediately abolished." "The question," says the Reviewer of Dr. Junkin's pamphlet, "now in process of investigation among American churches, is this, and no other: Are the professed Christians in our respective connex-

* Originally published in 1844, in review of the following works: 1. "The Integrity of our National Union vs. Abolitionism. An argument from the Bible, in proof of the position; that believing masters ought to be honoured and obeyed by their servants, and tolerated in, not excommunicated from the Church of God, being part of a speech delivered before the Synod of Cincinnati, on the subject of Slavery. September 19th and 20th, 1843. By Rev. George Junkin, D.D., President of Miami University."

2. "The Contrast, or the Bible vs. Abolitionism: an Exegetical Argument. By Rev. William Graham, Pastor of the Second Presbyterian church, Oxford, Ohio."

3. "A Review of the Rev. Dr. Junkin's Synodical Speech, in Defence of American Slavery, with an outline of the Bible argument against Slavery."

4. "Line of Demarcation between the Secular and Spiritual Kingdoms. By the Rev. William Wimer, D.D."

ions who hold their fellow men as slaves, thereby guilty of a sin which demands the cognisance of the church, and after due admonition, the application of discipline?" P. 17. This question abolitionists answer in the affirmative; all other men in the negative. Every party has a character as well as a creed. Whatever it is that holds them together as a party, gives them a common spirit, which again leads to characteristic measures and modes of action. If the bond of union is coincidence of opinion on some great principle in politics, religion or morals, then the characteristic spirit of the party will be determined by the nature of that opinion. If we look at the great parties in England, the Tory, Whig and Radical, we shall see they have each its own character, arising out of their distinctive principles. The Tory desires to see political power confined to the holders of property; the Whigs to the educated classes; the Radicals would have it extended to the whole population without regard to their intellectual or moral condition; and we see amidst the diversity of individual character, arising from a thousand different sources, a common spirit belonging to these several parties, arising from the distinctive principle of each. The correctness of this remark is still more obvious with regard to religious parties; because religious truth has a more direct and powerful influence on the character of men than mere political opinions. We not only see the great divisions of the Christian world, the evangelical, ritual, and rationalistic, exhibiting strongly-marked peculiarities, arising from the radically different views of doctrine which they entertain, but the minute subdivisions of the large classes have each its own distinctive character. It is impossible that the difference between the Calvinist and the evangelical Arminian should not manifest itself both in the state of their hearts and in outward acts. And who can shut his eyes to the influence exerted by the New Divinity, in all its modifications, as it has existed in this country? The spirit of censoriousness, of denunciation, of coarse authoritative dealing, and the whole array of new measures, were the natural fruit of the peculiar doctrines of one class of the advocates of the New Divinity, and especially of their opinion that a change of heart was a change of purpose, which a man could effect as easily as change his route on a journey. If, again, a party is constituted by a particular opinion on any question of morals, its character will depend upon the nature of that opinion. We may take as an illustration of this point the temperance society. The opinion that the use of spirituous liquors was in this age and country of evil tendency, and ought to be discountenanced by a general determination of the friends of temperance to abandon such use, had nothing in it anti-scriptural, nothing malevolent. So long, therefore, as this opinion continued the bond of union of the associated friends of temperance, their spirit was benevolent, and their measures mild. But as soon as the doctrine was embraced that the use of intoxicating liquors was in itself sinful, then poison was infused into the

whole organization. Then every man who drank a glass of wine was a sinner, and was to be made a subject of ecclesiastical discipline. Then the holy Scriptures were put to the torture to make them utter the new doctrine; and those to whose ears this utterance was not sufficiently distinct, made bold hypothetically to denounce them, and to blaspheme the Saviour of the world. Then a spirit of censoriousness, of defamation, and of falsehood, seized upon those in whom the virus had produced its full effect, making their publications an opprobrium and a nuisance.

We have in modern abolitionism another illustration of this same truth. That slavery, like despotism, in its very nature, supposes a barbarous or partially civilized condition of at least one portion of society; that it ought not and cannot, without gross injustice, be rendered permanent; that the means of moral and intellectual culture should be extended to slaves, and to the subjects of despotic governments, and the road of improvement be left open before them, is an opinion which any man may hold, and which we believe is in fact held by ninety-nine hundredths of all the intelligent and good men on the face of the earth. And that opinion may and ought to be made the foundation of wise and appropriate measures for carrying it into effect. But let a man adopt the opinion that slaveholding is "a heinous crime in the sight of God," and what is the result? Then he must regard every slaveholder as a criminal, to be denounced and treated accordingly; no matter how humble, meek, holy, heavenly-minded, just, benevolent, that slaveholder may be; no matter how parental in the treatment of his slaves, how assiduous in their religious improvement, how anxious to secure their preparation for freedom, he is, by the mere fact of holding slaves, proved to be a hypocrite, a malevolent and wicked man. Now such a judgment cannot be held without perverting the moral sense of the man who holds it. He must force himself to call evil good and good evil. The exhibition of Christian character, which ought to command confidence and affection, and in every healthful mind does command them, must excite in the mind poisoned by that false opinion disgust and hatred. A holy slaveholder is in his view as much a contradiction as a holy murderer; and he cannot therefore regard a slaveholder as a good man. But if (as what sane man can doubt?) he may be a sincere Christian, to be in a state of mind which forbids our recognising him as such, is to be morally diseased or deranged. According to genuine High Church doctrine, every man baptized and in communion with "the church," is a Christian, and no man not in such communion can be a Christian, or go to heaven. But as it often happens that many in "the church" are openly wicked, and many out of it are eminently holy, the High Churchman, if sincere and consistent, must regard the former with complacent feelings of Christian brotherhood, and the latter with aversion. It is, however, one of the most certain marks of a true Christian, to recognise and love the Christian character in others, and it is one of the

surest marks of an unrenewed heart, to feel aversion to those who are the true followers of Christ. The influence, therefore, of High Church principles on those who entertain them, must, from the nature of the case, be evil, and such all experience shows to be the fact. The fundamental principle of modern abolitionism must produce the same effect, on those who really embrace it. It must lead them to hate good men; it must cause them to shut their eyes to truth; to harden themselves against the plain manifestations of excellence. All this produces an unnatural conflict in their own minds. Their principle leads to the conclusion that the slaveholder is a "heinous criminal," they see however that he is sometimes a good man; they will not give up their principle nor the conclusion to which it leads, they are therefore forced to deny what they see to be true. This exasperates them and leads to the most unnatural exaggeration of what they call the crime of slaveholding, in order to satisfy their conscience, and justify them to themselves in their hatred and denunciation of good men. This sometimes goes so far as to produce complete moral derangement, when malice assumes in the view of the moral maniac, the appearance and character of benevolence, and cursing and bitterness sound in his ears like the accents of love. Our country has furnished more than one example of this kind, and the perverting influence of the fundamental error of the party is as manifest as day in the moral state of the great body of those in whom it exists as a practical principle.

It is no doubt true that no man's character is formed by one opinion; and therefore there are many who belong to the general class of abolitionists, who are in spirit and conduct, exemplary men. This, however, is no disproof of the evil tendency of the distinguishing principle of the party. In many minds it exists as little more than a speculation; in others its influence is counteracted by natural disposition, by the power of other and right opinions, and by the grace of God. But in itself, and as far as it is allowed to operate, it is evident that a principle which makes the man who entertains it, regard and denounce good men, who really love and serve the Lord Jesus Christ, as heinous criminals, unfit for Christian communion, must pervert the heart, and, where it has its full effect, destroy all semblance of religion. It is not invidious, nor otherwise improper, to appeal to the spirit and conduct of a party in illustration of the tendency of their distinctive doctrine, and while we admit, as above stated, that there are many good men among the abolitionists, we regard it as a notorious fact, that the spirit of the party, as a party, is an evil spirit; a spirit of railing, of bitterness, of exaggeration; a spirit which leads to the perversion of facts, and to assertions which often shock the common sense and moral feelings of the community. What but a spirit which blinds the mind, and perverts the heart, could lead, for example, to the assertion that in our country a minister, without injury to his character, could tie up his slave on Sabbath morning, and

having inflicted a cruel punishment, leave him suspended, go to church, preach the gospel, and administer the Lord's Supper, and then return to inflict additional stripes on the lacerated back of his wretched victim. To assert that a clergyman may be a hypocrite, or a forger, or a murderer, or a monster of cruelty, would not shock the common sense of men, for such things have been and may well be again; but to assert as characterizing the Christian people in our southern states, that a minister may without injury to his standing among them be guilty of atrocious cruelty, is a flagrant falsehood, which none but a fanatic could utter, and none but fanatics believe. And fanaticism, be it remembered, is only one form of the malignant passions. Speaking then in general terms, the spirit of the party, as manifested in their publications, is fierce, bitter and abusive,* as might be expected from the nature of their fundamental principle. Contrast with this for a moment the case of the early Christians. They were obliged to separate from the community in which they lived, to form a party by themselves, to denounce idolatry as a great sin, and idolaters as unfit for Christian Communion. But as their distinctive doctrines were true, the moral influence of those doctrines upon themselves was good; it did not render them as a class fierce, bitter and abusive; they were mild, kind, and conciliatory. The same thing may be said of the modern Christian missionaries in every part of the world and of every denomination. Though surrounded by the abominations of heathenism, and in continued conflict with error, they are not exasperated men, dealing in denunciations and abuse. The reason why their minds are composed, and in the exercise of benevolent affections, is that truth, and not error, is the principle which controls them. They are not called upon to do violence to their own moral judgments; they are not forced to treat the good as though they were wicked; and to justify themselves by saying that in despite of all appearances to the contrary, the men and things which they denounce, must be evil. If then it is true, that the spirit of the abolitionists, as a party, and speaking in the general, is an evil spirit, it is a decisive proof that their distinctive doctrine as a party is a false doctrine. For we are commanded to judge of things by their fruits.

Another collateral proof of the fallacy of their peculiar views, is that they have failed to command the assent of the great body of the intelligent and pious men of the country. Every great moral truth has a self-evidencing light. To the ignorant or depraved it may sometimes be difficult to communicate such

* This is substantially admitted even by Dr. Channing, who is claimed as the great ornament of their party. "The abolitionists have done wrong, I believe: nor is their wrong to be winked at, because done fanatically, or with good intentions; for how much mischief may be wrought with good designs! They have fallen into the common error of enthusiasts [fanatics?], that of exaggerating their object, of feeling as if no evil existed but that which they opposed, and as if no guilt could be compared with that of countenancing and upholding it. The tone of their newspapers, as far as I have seen them, has often been fierce, bitter and abusive."—*Slavery*. By William E. Channing, p. 193.

truths; that is, to make them distinct objects in their apprehension. But when understood or perceived they are of necessity perceived to be true. And the object of discussion on such doctrines, is not to prove them; but to state them; to present them as they are before the moral judgment of the mind; for the only way in which we can know a thing to be right or wrong is by seeing it to be the one or the other. No man was ever led to the perception of the moral evil of a thing, by arguing from its effects. He may see that a thing, indifferent in itself, is wrong under circumstances which make it productive of evil; and he may have his impression of the degree in which a thing is morally wrong, greatly influenced by observing its effects; but all things right or wrong in themselves are immediately perceived in their true character by every human mind, as soon as they are fairly presented to it, or clearly apprehended. It is indeed admitted that the moral judgment of men is often influenced by their interests, or by their previous moral condition. These causes operate, however, by either diverting the attention from the true object, so that it is not in fact properly perceived; or by affecting favourably or otherwise the sensibility of the soul, and thus modifying the moral emotions by whose light and under whose guidance the judgment of the mind is formed. The question whether heretics should be put to death, if it could be presented clearly to dispassionate men, could receive but one answer. The reason why some affirm and others deny the propriety of such executions, is, that entirely different questions are really before their minds. To a Protestant the question is, whether a man in the exercise of a discretion for which he is responsible to God alone, can justly be punished for the wrong exercise of that discretion, by those who have neither the competency nor right to sit in judgment on the case. That question every human being must answer in the negative. But to a genuine Romanist, the question is, whether a man who is guilty of an atrocious crime should be punished at the discretion of those who are infallible in judgment on such matters, and who have full authority to carry their judgment into effect. This again is a question which every man must answer in the affirmative. The fact, therefore, that men make different answers to questions involving grave points in morals, is no disproof of the self-evidencing light of moral truth; and of the legitimate authority with which it commands assent when it is clearly presented to the mind. This being admitted, we say that the fact that the great mass of the intelligent and pious men of the country reject the doctrine that "slaveholding is a heinous crime in the sight of God," is proof that it is false. For this fact cannot be accounted for by saying they do not understand the question; that the thing denied is not rightly conceived of, or is not clearly presented to their minds. Every man knows what slaveholding is; and men know what they mean when they deny that it is in its very nature criminal. Nor can it be said, that this judgment arises from want of

attention to the subject. There are many things to which even good men give an indolent assent as right, which, when they come to consider, they see to be wrong. This was the case with the slave-trade, and many other instances of a similar nature might be adduced. There are also many things which are long regarded as right, because they really are right upon the assumption of the correctness of the principles adopted by those who pronounce the judgment. Thus putting heretics to death is right, on the assumption of the infallibility of the church, and of its right to enforce its judgments by civil penalties. In the present case the judgment of the conscience of the country on the subject of slaveholding, cannot be set aside on the ground of want of consideration. The matter has been discussed in every way for a series of years, and that judgment is becoming the more fixed, the more it is enlightened.

Nor can this judgment be invalidated by attributing it to self-interest. We readily admit that if a man is personally interested in the decision of a question, he is not a fair judge in the case. The landholders in England sincerely believe the corn laws to be beneficial; the manufacturers as sincerely believe the reverse. Among ourselves, the growers of cotton honestly hold one system of political economy, and the growers of hemp another. It is hardly possible for a man, whose interests are deeply involved in any question, to avoid allowing his mind to dwell unduly upon those considerations which favour the decision which he desires, nor is he qualified to give the opposite considerations their proper weight. But we deny that the great body of intelligent and good men in this country are under the bias of interest, in the judgment which they give concerning slavery. They have no selfish interest in the matter. Those dwelling in non-slaveholding States might arrive at the conclusion that slaveholding is a sin, without endangering any of their personal interests, or disquieting their conscience in the least. They are just as free from selfish bias in the case as though sitting in judgment on the despotism of Russia. The unbiased judgment, therefore, of the great mass of intelligent and pious men in this country that slaveholding is not a crime, given after due consideration, is itself an argument not to be gainsaid, against the primary principle of the abolitionists.

It may be asked how we know that such is the judgment of the intelligent and good men of the country? The answer is, that is a conceded point. What is more common here or abroad than the assertion that the church and the clergy in this country, are the great enemies of abolition? What topic of denunciation is more frequent in all the publications of the party than the corruption of the church on this subject, and how loud the complaints that no church has yet been brought up to take ground with the abolitionists? Now we suppose no one, not even an abolitionist, will deny that the church, meaning thereby all in this great country who profess to be the followers of Christ, comprises a large portion of the intelligence and piety of the country; and as

to the educated men not included among the members of the church, it is plain that a still smaller portion belong to the ranks of abolitionism. No church (i. e., denomination of Christians) of any consideration for numbers, has adopted the principle that slaveholders as such should be excluded from Christian communion. The Congregationalists of New England, the Episcopalians, the Presbyterians, the Baptists, the Methodists, have one and all refused to sanction the unscriptural doctrine on which the whole structure of moral abolitionism rests. Now we consider it little less than preposterous to assume that a mere fraction of the great family of Christians should, on a simple question of morals, be in the right, and the great mass of their brethren, with the same advantages for forming a correct judgment, in the wrong.

But have not the abolitionists the voice of the church in Great Britain in their favour? Far from it. There is indeed a great deal of loose declamation, and no little fanatical zeal on this subject prevailing in that country. But when did any denomination of Christians in Great Britain assume the ground that slaveholders should be excluded from the church? We are not aware that the missionaries of the Church of England, or of the Church of Scotland, or of the Independents, or of the Methodists, or of the Baptists, or of the Moravians, operating in countries where slavery existed, were ever directed or authorized to act upon the principle of debarring all slaveholders from the table of the Lord. That is a step towards the subversion of the scriptures as a rule of faith and practice, yet to be taken. And the day we trust is far distant when this form of benevolent infidelity shall receive the sanction of any of the great bodies into which the church is now divided.

Strong as these arguments against the doctrine of the abolitionists, derived from its necessary and actual effects, and from the judgment of the great mass of competent judges, are, we admit they would be driven to the wind by one clear declaration of scripture in its favour. Let God be true, but every man a liar. Into this scriptural argument, however, we cannot persuade ourselves to enter at any length, because the matter does not admit of argument. It is as plain as it can be made. A few years ago, when a spirit of fanaticism seized the friends of temperance, much learning was expended in the attempt to prove that the Bible condemned as sinful even the moderate use of intoxicating liquor. Now what has become of that doctrine? The plain sense of the scripture, like a mighty stream, has borne away all the learned rubbish so laboriously raked together, and would have done so had no attempt been made, able and conclusive as those attempts were, to remove that rubbish by other means. In like manner the scriptures do so plainly teach that slaveholding is not in itself a crime, that it is a mere waste of time to attempt to prove it; and a great deal worse than a waste of time to attempt to make them teach the contrary.

It will of course be admitted that what God has at any time sanctioned cannot be evil in its own nature. If, therefore, it can

be shown that God did permit his people under the old dispensation to be slaveholders, slaveholding in itself cannot be a heinous crime. It will further be admitted that anything permitted under the old economy, and which the apostles continued to permit to those whom they received into the church, cannot be a crime justifying exclusion from Christian communion.

That God did under the old dispensation permit his people to hold slaves is proved not only by the fact that Abraham was, with the implied permission of God, a slaveholder, but especially by the fact that through Moses that permission was expressly granted, the class of persons who might be held in slavery designated, the different ways in which they might be reduced to a state of bondage pointed out, and laws enacted as to the manner in which they were to be treated. All these are plain matters of fact, admitted, as far as we know, by every man, woman and child, who ever read the Bible, until the lurid day of modern illumination. These facts are abundantly proved by Dr. Junkin and Mr. Graham in the pamphlets which stand in the margin of this article, and to which we refer any of our readers who have any doubt on the subject. We shall content ourselves with merely citing a few passages from the laws of Moses, allowing them to speak for themselves.

What however is a slave? Before determining whether slavery is recognised in the Bible, we must know what slavery is. "A slave," says the reviewer of Dr. Junkin's pamphlet, "is a human being who is made an article of property." And this is the definition usually given by abolitionists. The gravamen of the charge against slavery is, that it makes a man a thing in distinction from a person. This charge is an absurdity in the very terms of it; and yet we doubt not that it is some obscure feeling of the outrage to human nature involved in making "a man a thing," that is the source of much of the horror commonly expressed on this subject; and the reason of the ready credence often given to the doctrine that "slaveholding is a heinous crime." It would indeed be a great crime, and moreover a great miracle, if it involved making things of human beings. Under no system of slave-laws that ever existed is a slave regarded otherwise than as a person, that is, an intelligent moral agent. Those very laws, atrocious as they often are, by holding the slave responsible for his acts, suppose him to be a human being. The abolitionists impose upon themselves and others by not defining what they mean by property, and by not determining the sense in which one man can be said to be the property of another man. Property is simply the right of possession and use; the right of having and using. From the necessity of the case, as well as from the laws of God, this right must vary according to the nature of its object. If a man has property in land, he must use it as land, and he cannot use it as anything else. If he has property in an animal he can use it only as an animal; and if he has property in a man, he can use him only as a man. And as the use he may make of an animal is regulated by its

nature and by the laws of God ; so his property in a man gives him no right to treat him contrary to his nature, or to act towards him with injustice. If one man has property in another he must still treat him as a human being ; if he kills him he is guilty of murder ; if he insults or wounds him he is guilty of cruelty ; if he shuts him out from the gospel, he will find the blood of a soul upon his hands ; if he keep him in ignorance, he is guilty of gross injustice. The right of property, even if admitted, gives no right to do any of the things just mentioned. It gives in some cases the power to do them, just as the right of a parent to the control of his children gives him the power of rendering them miserable, of depriving them of the gospel, and of bringing them up in ignorance. But it confers no right to do these things. It is the confused notion which they entertain of the right of property which leads the writers on this subject into most of their false reasoning. " If," says the Reviewer before quoted, " A may justly hold B as property, as he holds his land, cattle, &c. ; it necessarily follows that A may justly sell B to be separated from his wife, and B's children to be separated from their parents." P. 59. He might as well say, that because a man may justly hold cattle as property, as he holds his lands or trees, therefore he may justly treat his cattle as if they were made of wood. His property in cattle gives him no right to use them in any way in which sentient creatures ought not to be used ; and his property in a man gives him no right to use *him*, in any way in which a rational, immortal being, his equal in the sight of God, may not properly be used. The right of property is merely the right to have and to use a thing according to its nature ; and as a man has a rational, moral, and social nature, it is no more an incident of the right of property in him, that these attributes may be disregarded, than it is an incident of the right of property in an ox or horse that their nature as sentient creatures may be disregarded. What men have the power to do, in virtue of the relation in which they stand to others, and what they have a right to do in virtue of that relation, are two very different things, which abolitionists constantly confound. As already remarked, the parental relation gives a man the power to do a thousand things he has no right to do ; so the relation between master and slave, assuming it to be a perfectly righteous one, gives the former the power to do many things which that relation cannot justify. The only right of property which one man has or can have in another, is a right to his services ; just as his right of property in a horse is a right to have and use him as a horse. And as the obligation arises out of ownership in the latter case, to provide for the wants of the horse, as a sentient creature, so the obligation arises out of the ownership in the former case, to provide for the wants of the man, not only as a sentient, but as a rational, moral, social and immortal being. And as the man who, on the plea of ownership, should neglect the wants of his horse, would be self condemned ; so the man who,

on a similar plea, neglects the infinitely more pressing wants of his slave, as a rational creature, will be condemned by the united judgment of God and man. If abolitionists could disabuse their minds of their crude ideas on the subject of property, though they might find they had lost almost all their stock in trade, they would at least have the satisfaction of understanding what they are writing about, and might be induced to adopt wiser measures for accomplishing their object.

It follows from what has been said of the right of property, as consisting in the right of having and using, that it may be transferable. It is not necessarily so, as a man may have a full right to have and use a thing, when he cannot transfer that right to another. This is often the case when a certain property is attached to an office or a title. In other cases the right of transfer may be restricted by certain conditions ; as when slaves are bound to the soil. Their owner can sell them only on condition of selling the land on which they live. The price he receives is not the mere value of the land, but the value of the land together with the value of his right to the service of those living upon it. In ordinary cases, however, the right of property is transferable. If I have a right to the possession or use of anything, I may give, or sell, or bequeath that right to another. Of course, however, I can give only what I possess ; and as my right of property in a man is, and can be nothing more than the right to his services, that is all I can transfer to another ; and this right must go with all the responsibilities which of necessity attach to it ; the responsibility of providing for his wants as a man, who has a soul as well as a body. When, therefore, we speak of buying and selling men, all that can be meant is the transfer of this right of service ; a right of necessity limited and defined by the nature of the being whose services are to be rendered. A man's right to the services of another may be unconditional, so that he may transfer it at any time or to any person ; or it may be so limited that he can transfer it only when he transfers the land on which the man lives ; or his right may extend to only a part of his time, as in the case of the old feudal tenures ; or to a particular kind of service only, such as that due from a feudal proprietor to his lord, or from a subject to his sovereign. But whatever the right is, it is generally transferable, and therefore we find subjects passing from one sovereign to another, serfs from one landlord to another, and slaves from one master to another : and in all these cases, which in principle are the same, there is nothing more than the transfer of the right of service.

Another obvious remark which flows from what has been said is, that the nature of the relation between a master and his slaves does not depend upon the mode in which that relation is constituted, or upon the time it is to continue. Any man who is the property of another man, is, by the admitted definition of the term, a slave. It matters not, as far as the nature of the relation is concerned,

whether that right of property was acquired by gift, inheritance or purchase; and if by purchase, it matters not whether the man was sold by himself, or his parents, or by a former owner, or by the state in punishment of some crime. The validity and justice of a man's title to any property, do indeed depend upon the immediately prior title whence it is derived. And if the proposition of the abolitionists was that the right of property in man, unless acquired in a proper way, cannot be justly claimed or exercised, it would be perfectly harmless. It would be analogous to a declaration that landholding under a fraudulent title is unjust. But would it hence follow that landholding is a heinous crime? Their proposition is that slaveholding is a crime; and their argument is that one man cannot rightfully own another man; that from his nature man cannot be an article of property; and they attempt to sustain this argument from scripture by trying to show that the Bible, so far from authorizing one man's owning another, expressly forbids it. Having shown that ownership in man includes and can include nothing more than a right to his services, our object in this paragraph is to prove the fallacy of the above argument, by showing first that it is so broad as to include all modes of acquiring this right of property, since it condemns the thing itself; and secondly, that when they come to the scriptures, they attempt to evade their authority by resting their condemnation not on the thing itself, not on the mere fact of one man's owning another, but on the particular mode in which he acquires his right as owner, and on the length of time he exercises it. But if the fundamental principle of the abolitionists is correct, it obviously makes no difference how the relation of master and slave is constituted. However ownership in man is acquired, it must, according to their doctrine, be unjust and offensive to God. If a man reduced to poverty, not knowing how to obtain a support, comes to another and offers to serve him all his life, if the law of the land recognises such a contract, he becomes a slave; he belongs to his master in the fullest sense in which one man can belong to another. This is what the Egyptians did, when under the pressure of famine, having sold everything they had, they came to Joseph and said: Buy us and our land for bread; and Joseph gave them bread and said, Behold I have bought you and your land for Pharaoh. Here is an instance of the relation of master and slave constituted by voluntary contract. And there are numerous cases of a like kind recorded in scripture on a less extensive scale. Now suppose that a man who had in this way acquired the right of property to a number of men, should, as a gift or for money, transfer that right to another, would its nature be altered by the transfer? Would the men be more slaves in the second case than in the former? Would the first master be entitled to lift clean hands to God, and the second be a man-stealer, and everything else that abolitionists call slaveholders? It is perfectly obvious that the nature of the relation or their principle, does not depend on the mode in which it is con-

stituted. If a man sells himself he is as much a slave as if sold by another man, and consequently the abolitionists cannot evade the authority of the sacred scriptures, by saying (though without evidence) that the slaves the Israelites were permitted to hold, sold themselves. Suppose they did, their masters were still slaveholders, and therefore, according to their doctrine, guilty of a heinous crime against God.

Nor does the nature of the relation between master and slave depend on the length of time for which it is to continue. A man sold for a term of years is as much a slave as a man sold for life. This is evident from the definition of the word slave, as one who belongs to another; from the usage of scripture and of human laws on the subject. In most of the states in which slavery has been abolished, it was enacted that slaves born after a certain year should be free at the age of twenty-one or twenty-five years. Until that age they were slaves; subject to all the laws relating to that class of persons. It hence follows, that if the Bible sanctioned slaveholding for a term of years, it sanctioned what abolitionists condemn as a heinous crime. The validity of the argument therefore against the abolitionists, drawn from the laws of Moses, does not depend on the question whether the slaves there spoken of sold themselves, or whether their bondage was perpetual or ceased at the year of Jubilee. If they were sold so as to belong to another man for life or for a term of years, they were for the time being slaves.

If the abolitionists turn round and say their arguments are directed against involuntary and perpetual bondage, we answer, 1. That such is not the fact. Their denunciations are directed against slaveholding, against making men property, an article of traffic to be bought and sold. But a slave who sold himself, as the Egyptians did, may be sold by his master for life or a term of years, as well as a man who was born a slave. And, therefore, their arguments are not in point of fact confined to slavery which is involuntary and perpetual. 2. In a multitude of cases in our own country and elsewhere, slaves prefer to remain the property of their masters, secure of an abundant support, when in health, and of a comfortable maintenance in sickness and old age. In all such cases, slaveholding is not a heinous crime, if involuntary bondage alone is slavery. Yet it is notorious that the class of slaveholders whose slaves prefer to remain such, are not exempted from the denunciations of the abolitionists. They are considered as holding an unlawful relation to their fellow men, as much as though they were living in adultery or in any other acknowledged crime. The very question as stated by the abolitionists is, whether those professing Christians who hold slaves are guilty of a sin which calls for the censure of the church? 3. This change of position is of course a concession that slaveholding is not in itself a sin. A man may be an article of property, he may be bought and sold, he may be a slave, provided he only consents to be so. Slaveholding, then, is like landholding, right or wrong,

according to circumstances. The propriety of both depends on the validity of the title. It is sinful for a man to keep possession of a piece of land, to which he has no other title than force or fraud; and it is sinful for one man to hold another as a slave unless he has a legitimate title to his services. The whole question now is, what is a legitimate title? Abolitionists are forced, inconsistently indeed, to admit that consent of parties confers a good title. But can such title be acquired in no other way? A full answer to that question would require a thorough examination of the origin of the right of property, and of the circumstances which rightfully give one man a claim, more or less extended, to the services of another. Such an examination, however, the present occasion forbids, and our object does not demand it. It is enough to remark, 1. That the validity of the present title of a man to his property does not depend on the validity of the title of the original possessor from whom the right is derived. That is to say, the title which the people of this country have to their farms, does not depend upon the question whether the Pope and the sovereigns of Europe had a right to take this country from the Indians, and give it to whom they pleased. Most landholders in New Jersey trace their titles to the gift by Charles II. to the Duke of York. If it be admitted that Charles had no valid right to the soil, and therefore could convey none to his brother, nor his brother to the original proprietors who purchased from him, it will not follow that the title of the present holders of the soil is invalid or unrighteous. Neither does it follow from the simple fact that the ancestors of the slaves now in this country were most unrighteously obtained, that the title of the owners of the present generation is necessarily invalid. 2. It may be remarked that the right of ownership of one man in another, that is, a right to his services, may arise from dependence. If that dependence is absolute and perpetual, so will the right of property be. If it is only partial and temporary, the right arising from it will in like manner be partial and temporary. Dependence is one of the sources at least of the obligation of children to render service to their parents; and the assumption of such dependence of feudal serfs on their lords, and of subjects on their sovereigns, is made one great ground of the claim of the latter to the services of the former. If, therefore, one man was absolutely dependent on another for support and protection, he would be his slave, that is, he would be righteously bound to render him service. This remark is made simply as indicating one of the ways in which the relation between master and slave might originate without injustice. 3. But as all slaves in this country were born such, the only practically important question is, whether a constitution of society in which one man is by birth placed in such a relation to another man as to be bound to labour for him, upon condition of having all his wants as a human being adequately supplied, is necessarily sinful? That question cannot be answered in the affirmative, without asserting that it is sinful to have the relative

position of men in society determined by the accident of birth. And this latter position cannot be maintained, without contradicting the Bible and the common judgment of mankind. By divine appointment, under the old dispensation, one man was born High Priest, the most important position in the community, another an ordinary priest, another a simple Levite, another a layman, who could never attain to the privileges of the other classes, and another a hewer of wood and drawer of water. Such an arrangement cannot in itself be sinful, because God ordained it; nor does the light of nature contradict this decision of the word of God. In some states of society this might be the best method of distributing the various classes of the community, in others it might be highly injurious. It is therefore neither forbidden nor commanded. Men are left at liberty to determine the mode in which society shall be constituted, guided by the peculiar circumstances of the community, and the immutable obligation to adopt that method which is for the general good. Moreover, neither the church nor world has ever maintained that hereditary monarchy and hereditary nobility were in their own nature sinful, so that no man can be a monarch or a noble without committing heinous crime in the sight of God. And even if the monarch were possessed of irresponsible power over the property and lives of his subjects, undesirable and impossible as such a form of government would be, in an advanced state of society, it would not in its nature be sinful. Even Mr. Birney, the abolition candidate for the Presidency, has admitted that his conscience would allow him to possess the unlimited power of a Roman Emperor, though it would direct him to use that power for the benefit of his subjects. But if the word of God does not condemn as sinful either the possession of unlimited power, or the designation by the accident of birth of the person who is to hold it; then it is admitted that it is not necessarily sinful that one man should by birth be assigned to the rank of king, noble, or master, and another to that of subject, commoner, or slave. As this diversity of condition among men has always existed, as there have always been masters and servants, if there is nothing sinful in the nature of the relation, neither is there in its being determined by birth.

Does then the word of God sanction this relation? Did it permit the Israelites to own men, to buy and sell them? If so, then no man who can bow his heart and conscience to the authority of God, can pronounce slaveholding to be a heinous crime. It is conceded that the heathen by whom these patriarchs and their descendants were surrounded, were slaveholders in the strictest sense of the term. This was the case with the Egyptians, the Midianites, and the inhabitants of Canaan. The Reviewer of Dr. Junkin allows that Joseph in the house of Potiphar was properly called a Hebrew slave, and that the servants given by Abimelech to Abraham were slaves, since Abimelech was a heathen. But on what evidence does this conviction rest that the heathen of that age were slaveholders? It rests on the fact that the Scrip-

tures speak of their having, buying, selling, and giving away men as servants. This is regarded as sufficient. But all this is recorded of the Patriarchs and of the Hebrews under Moses. Abraham is spoken of as having men servants and maid servants, they are enumerated as a part of his possessions; he is said to have received slaves as a present: Abimelech took sheep and oxen, and men servants and maid servants, and gave them unto Abraham. Gen. xx., 14. Pharaoh had before made him a similar gift, for it is said, he entreated Abram well for Sarah's sake, and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and men servants, and maid servants. He circumcised "all that were bought with his money." Hagar was his bond-woman, and as such is contrasted with Sarah who was a free woman. All that the apostle says of this case in Gal. iv., 21-31, depends for its significancy on the fact that Hagar was a slave, to whom could be applied the phrase *εἰς δουλείαν γυνώσκω*, "gendering to bondage." How could it be said, "She is in bondage with her children," but on the assumption that she was a slave, and that the children of a slave mother were born in bondage? This is the very point of the apostle's illustration. So in later times we hear of the Hebrews having, buying, and selling slaves; for a slave is a man who may be bought and sold. In Numbers xxxi., 26 et seqq., we have an account of the distribution of the spoil taken from the Midianites, among which women and children are enumerated, and which were given in certain proportions to the conquerors. This is a narrative, which if found in any other book, would be universally understood as teaching that these captives were slaves. And there is no reason why it should not be so understood here. As we have in this case one of the ways in which the Hebrews were allowed by God to acquire slaves, so we hear of their possessing them, and buying and selling them. In Lev. xxii. 10, 11, it is said, "A sojourner of a priest, or an hired servant, shall not eat of the holy thing. But if the priest buy any soul with his money he shall eat of it, and he that is born in his house, they shall eat of it." The precision of modern language could not distinguish more accurately between a free servant and a slave, than is done in this passage. The law respecting the Passover was of the same kind. "There shall no stranger eat thereof; but every man's servant that is bought with money, when thou hast circumcised him, then he shall eat thereof," Ex. xii., 43, 44. Being thus bought, these slaves were by the law of Moses regarded as the property of their masters. They are called money, possession. If a man smote his servant, if he died under his hand, the master was to be punished; if he continued a day or two the owner was not punished, for the servant was his money, Ex. xxi., 21. The right of masters to sell their slaves is constantly assumed. It is implied in the right to buy, which supposes a sale. It is implied in the very nature of the relation as the slave was the money, the possession, the inheritance of the master. It is implied in the restrictions which are imposed upon the right, a

man could not sell a female slave whom he had humbled; "thou shalt not make merchandise of her because thou hast humbled her," Deut. xxi., 14. Nor could he sell her to a foreign nation, Ex. xxi., 8. If a master wounded a slave he could not sell him, he must let him go free without money, Ex. xxi.

The clearest and most explicit enactments on this whole subject are found in Lev. xxv., 39-46. "If thy brother *that dwelleth* by thee be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee; thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bond servant; but as an hired servant, and as a sojourner shall he be with thee, *and* shall serve thee unto the year of jubilee; then shall he depart from thee, *both* he and his children with him, and shall return unto his own family, and unto the possession of his father shall he return. For they are my servants which I brought forth out of the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold as bondmen. Thou shalt not rule over him with rigour, but shalt fear thy God. Both thy bondmen, and thy bondmaids, which thou shalt have, *shall be* of the heathen that are round about you; of them shall ye buy bondmen and bondmaids. Moreover, of the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy, and of their families that are with you, which they begat in your land; and they shall be your possession. And ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit *them* for a possession. They shall be your bondmen for ever; but over your brethren the children of Israel, ye shall not rule over one another with rigour."

We do not know how this passage can be rendered plainer than it is, nor can we hope that any man, who is in such a state of mind as to prevent his seeing and admitting that it authorized the Hebrews to hold slaves, could be convinced even if one rose from the dead. It is here taught, 1. That if a Hebrew through poverty sold himself, he should not be reduced to the abject state of a slave. 2. That he should be treated as a hired servant. 3. And be allowed to go free at the year of Jubilee. This is the precise condition which abolitionists assign to the heathen servants among the Hebrews, whereas it is here declared to be peculiar to servants who were children of Israel; who could not be sold as bondmen, *venditione mancipii*, as the elder Michaelis translates it. Of the other class it is taught, 1. That they might be bought for bondmen. 2. That they might be held as a possession or property. 3. They might be bequeathed by their masters to the children as a possession; *hereditario jure possidebitis*, as Michaelis renders the phrase; or as De Wette translates it to the letter: *Ihr möget sie vererben auf eure Söhne nach euch als Eigenthum. You may bequeathe them to your children after you for a possession.* 4. This bondage was perpetual. They shall be your bondmen for ever. One of the points of distinction between the two classes was, that the former could not be sold in perpetuity—the latter might. As the land of a Hebrew could not be alienated, so his person could not be reduced to perpetual bondage. At the year of jubilee he

was to go free, and his inheritance reverted to him. In contrast with this, Moses allows the heathen to be reduced to perpetual bondage. Hebrews shall not be sold with the sale of a slave, *conditio mancipii*, v. 42; the heathen may be thus sold, is the very point of contrast, v. 46. If the former passage forbade reducing Israelites to the condition of slaves, the latter allowed the heathen to be so reduced. Again, both the Hebrew words and the construction in v. 39, are the same as v. 46. An Israelite "thou shalt not compel to serve as a bond servant;" the heathen "shall be your bondmen." What is forbidden in the one case, was allowed in the other.*

If, then, men, who were the property, a possession of other men, who might be bought and sold; who could be given or bequeathed as a possession to the children of their masters, were slaves, then were the Hebrews allowed to hold slaves. The attempts made to evade this plain teaching of the scripture, are precisely similar to those which are made to prove that the Bible condemns as sinful all use of wine as a beverage, and that it pronounces even defensive war to be sinful. It is impossible to answer mere assertions. And the more extravagant the assertion, the more impossible the answer. How can a man be refuted who should say, as we know an ultra advocate of temperance did say, that the passage which speaks of John the Baptist coming neither eating nor drinking, means that he drank no water, but only milk; whereas Christ came drinking water; though he was called a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber. So when abolitionists say in reference to all the passages above referred to, that the bondmen of the Hebrews, even from among the heathen, were voluntary servants, who themselves received the purchase money paid for them, that they were in fact hired servants, receiving wages, hiring themselves for a term of years instead of for a single year, or for a day, or week, or month, who could neither be sold nor bequeathed; we know not how they are to be answered, any more than if they were to assert they were all ten feet high. Certain it is, the assertion is gratuitous. It is not only destitute of support, but contrary to the plain meaning of the words, and to the sense attributed to them in all ages. Moses found the institution of slavery existing at his day, and acted with regard to it as he did with regard to many other things; instead of prohibiting it, he made laws regulating the power of the master, and furthering the interests of the slave. He forbade any Hebrew being reduced to the state of

* We copy part of the comment of Henry as given in the Comprehensive Commentary on vs. 44-46. "They might purchase bondmen of the heathen nations round about them, or of those strangers that sojourned among them (except of the seven nations to be destroyed), and might claim a dominion over them, and entail them on their families as an inheritance, for the year of Jubilee should give no discharge to them." This he says was designed to intimate "that none shall have the benefit of the gospel-jubilee, but only Israelites indeed, and the children of Abraham by faith; as for those who continue heathenish, they continue bondmen." If Matthew Henry were living now and in this country, should we not see him threatened with deposition from the ministry for such sentiments?

perpetual bondage; he required that slaves of heathen origin should be set free whenever they were cruelly treated, and as a punishment for such cruelty, he required that the master should assume towards them the responsibilities of a parent, introduce them into the covenant of God as though they were his own children, grant them access to the means of religious instruction, by admitting them to the passover and other commemorative feasts, by which the knowledge of God's dealings with his people was principally preserved and propagated; and he enjoined that they should share in all the privileges of the Sabbath and sabbatical year. In this way, rather than by the immediate abolition or absolute prohibition of slavery, infinite wisdom saw fit, in that age and state of the world, to provide for the improvement and happiness of men. And by this means thousands from the surrounding nations were rescued from heathenism, introduced into the church of God and made a component part of his people.

We have thought it the less necessary to go into detail on the argument from the Old Testament, because we consider abolitionists as abandoning the whole ground, and conceding the whole question, when they come to the New Testament. How they can avoid feeling condemned out of their own lips, is more than we can understand. The admitted facts of the case are these, 1. That at the time of the introduction of Christianity, slavery in its worst form prevailed extensively over the world. The slaves are estimated as amounting to one-half or two-thirds of the population of the Roman Empire; and the severity with which they were treated was extreme. 2. That neither Christ nor his apostles ever denounced slaveholding as a crime. 3. That they never urged emancipation as an immediate duty. These are the facts: the inference is irresistible, slaveholding cannot be a crime. It is placed by the inspired writers upon the same ground with despotism. The possession of absolute sovereignty in the state, the exercise by one man of the supreme legislative, judicial and executive functions of government, is not in its own nature sinful. If such a sovereign is wise, just and benevolent, he may be a great benefactor, and secure the approbation of all good men. Accordingly, the apostles, though living under the reign of Nero, while they denounce all injustice and cruelty, whether in despot, master, or parent, never say a word about the sin of despotism. On the contrary, they enjoined the duty of submission to the exercise of that authority; teaching that human government, however constituted, was an ordinance of God; that the king, though such a king as Nero, was still the minister of God, an avenger to execute wrath, responsible for the exercise of power, but not for the then possession of it. In like manner, though masters were invested with greater power over their slaves than any master now possesses, the apostles, instead of enjoining them to lay it aside, commanded them to exercise it properly, to be just and equal in all their dealings, remembering that they too had a master in heaven.

On the slaves they enjoined obedience, not only when the masters were good and gentle, but also when they were froward; holding up to them the example of the Redeemer himself, who patiently submitted to injury. They cautioned those who had believing masters, against despising them because they were brethren. The equality which existed between them and their masters, as brethren in Christ, was no reason why they should not render to them the honour and service due to them as their masters according to the flesh.

Such is the plain teaching of the New Testament on this subject, and it is absolutely irreconcilable with the assumption that the apostles regarded slaveholding as a heinous crime. It is here that the argument of the abolitionists breaks down entirely. We have often seen children building houses with cards; after laying a broad foundation and carrying up the structure with the greatest care and skill to the proposed height, in placing the last card in position, the whole collapses and lies in ruins at their feet. Thus these brethren begin with Abraham, and by dint of learning, ingenuity, and hard asserting, make out a tottering case; but when they come to the admission that Christ and his apostles, though living in the midst of slavery, never denounced slaveholding as a sin and never enjoined immediate emancipation as a duty, their whole laborious structure is prostrated in a moment. The concession of those facts is a concession that they differ from their Master and his inspired apostles.

The solution which they give of the facts referred to is altogether unsatisfactory. They say in substance, that the apostles concealed the truth, that they were afraid of consequences, that they acted from policy or motives of expediency.* Our answer to this is: 1. That such conduct would be immoral. For men professing to be inspired teachers of truth and duty, to appear among men living in the daily commission of "a heinous crime in the sight of God," and never once tell them it was a crime; to allow them to go on in this course of iniquity to the ruin of their souls, is a supposition which shocks the moral sense. Nothing but the explicit declaration that slaveholding was a crime, and immediate emancipation a duty, could satisfy the demands of conscience in such a case. Men were constantly coming to the apostles to ask what they must do to be saved, what God would have them to do, and if they did not answer those questions openly and honestly, according to their real convictions, they were bad men. Such conduct in any other case would by all men be pronounced immo-

* This is the ground they are forced to take. The Reviewer of Dr. Junkin's pamphlet says: "To have waged a public war against slavery, to have taken the stand and employed the active efforts now adopted by abolitionists, would have been, humanly speaking, to have drawn upon their heads immediate and utter destruction, and that without even the remotest prospect of benefiting the poor slaves."—P. 109. "We need not expect, therefore, in the New Testament, a direct declaration of the fact that man cannot hold property in man; nor that immediate emancipation is a Christian duty."—P. 110.

ral. Suppose our missionaries among the heathen, in teaching the gospel, should, from motives of policy, abstain from telling them the truth, should fail intentionally to inform them that idolatry, adultery, child-murder, or any like crime, was a grievous sin in the sight of God, would not all the world pronounce them unfaithful? Do not abolitionists condemn southern ministers for not explicitly stating that slaveholding is a crime, and immediate emancipation a duty? Would they not view with abhorrence the minister who really coincided with them in his views, and yet, through fear of the consequences, held his peace, and allowed his hearers to sin on in security? Would not, on the contrary, the world ring with their shouts in praise of the man who in fidelity to God, and in love to man, should openly preach the truth on these points to a congregation of slaveholders, even though it brought sudden destruction on his own head? We fear, however, we are only obscuring the clearness of a self-evident truth by multiplying illustrations. The conduct of the apostles is absolutely irreconcilable with moral honesty, if they believed slaveholding to be a heinous crime in the sight of God. They were either bad men, or they were not abolitionists, in the American sense of that word.

2. But again, the course ascribed to the apostles, in reference to slavery, is not only base in itself, but it is contrary to their conduct in all analogous cases. Slaveholding is the only sin familiar to those to whom they preached, and about which they wrote, that they failed to denounce. Idolatry was a crime which was more prevalent than slaveholding; more implicated in all the institutions of life, in support of which stronger passions were engaged, and in attacking which they could not look for the support of one-half or two-thirds of the community. Yet idolatry they everywhere proclaimed to be a crime inconsistent with Christianity, and a bar to salvation. The consequence was the apostles were persecuted even to death. It is not true that they kept back the truth for fear of suffering. They called God to witness that they declared the whole counsel of God, and were clear of every man's blood. It is said that the cases of idolatry and slavery are not parallel, because it was more dangerous to denounce the latter than the former. Admitting the fact, is the degree of danger attending the discharge of a duty the measure of its obligation? Must a religious teacher, in explaining the way of salvation, keep back the truth—one of the most effectual methods of teaching falsehood—because he may incur danger by inculcating it? We do not, however, believe the allegation. We believe that the apostles might have taught that slaveholding is a sin, with far less danger than that which they incurred by teaching that what the heathen sacrificed they sacrificed to devils. We need not conceive of their adopting the system of agitation, and the whole "moral machinery" of modern times. They adopted no such course with regard to idolatry. But they might doubtless with comparative safety have told slaveholders that it was their duty to emancipate their slaves.

They could as well have enjoined them to set their servants free, as to command them to render to them what is just and equal. Many men, without any great exhibition of courage, have taught and do still teach the moral evil of slaveholding in the midst of slaveholders. And even now, any man who, in a meek, sincere, and benevolent spirit, should say to southern planters that the relation they sustain to their slaves is contrary to the will of God, and incompatible with their own salvation, would meet with no greater disturbance than the Quakers have experienced in making their annual testimony against slavery.

The course ascribed to the apostles is not only inconsistent with fidelity and contrary to their uniform practice, but it is moreover opposed to the conduct of the messengers of God in all ages. The ancient prophets never failed to reprove the people for their sins, and to exhort them to repentance, no matter how strong the attachment of their hearers to their iniquity, or how powerful the interests leagued in its support. Elijah did not fail to denounce the worship of Baal, though Ahab and Jezebel were determined to kill the prophets of God; nor did John the Baptist fail to tell Herod that it was not lawful for him to have his brother's wife.

This is one of the most serious aspects of this whole discussion. The testimony of scripture is so clearly against the fundamental principle of modern abolitionism, that the most violent processes of interpretation must be resorted to, to get rid of its authority; and the example of the apostles is so opposed to the doctrine of the party, that to evade its force they are constrained to ascribe to the messengers of Christ principles of conduct which the moral sense instinctively condemns. This course cannot be pursued without weakening the authority of the word of God. When any set of men assume that a doctrine, whether it be the Trinity, personal election, or future punishment, cannot be true, and go to the scriptures with the determination to silence their testimony, or to make them speak in accordance with their preconceived opinions, they wrong their own souls, and put themselves above the word of God. Or if they assume on general grounds that the use of wine, defensive war, the holding of slaves, is in itself a sin, and place the scriptures on the rack of criticism, to make them teach the same doctrine, it is bad for them, bad for the church, and bad for the country. It of course makes a great difference whether this conflict with the Bible is associated with the benevolent or with the malignant feelings of our nature; but it is well for us to remember that we cannot be more benevolent than God, and that it is vain for us to condemn what his word allows. And if we at any time feel that the scriptures trouble us; if we wish they did not say exactly what they do say, if we should be glad to alter them to bring them nearer to our mind, we may be certain that the fault is in ourselves. The more perfectly we can sympathize with the word as it is; the more entirely our understanding,

heart, and conscience, accord with its statements, the more healthful is the state of our minds. And on the contrary, the more we rise in conflict with its obvious import, the more we feel constrained to resort to evasions and unnatural interpretations to escape from its authority, the more certainly are we in the wrong. And when the pride of our nature rises so high as to lead us to declare that if the Bible really teaches this or that, which to all appearance it does teach, we renounce it, then we become judges and not doers of the law.

We have repeatedly admitted, though we believe the fundamental principles of abolitionism to be false and its spirit fanatical, leading to a censoriousness, and evil speaking of Christian brethren, exceedingly offensive to God, yet that many good men are to be found in their ranks. It may therefore be proper to ask, How it is that on a question of morals, good men should be so divided in their judgments, one affirming, another denying that slaveholding is a crime? We think we have already intimated the true solution of this question. They have in a great measure different objects before their minds. What the abolitionists, for the most part, really condemn, the true objects of their moral disapprobation, is not slaveholding, but the slave-laws; and what the other party vindicate as not necessarily inconsistent with the will of God, is slaveholding, and not the slave-laws of this or any other country. It is the want of discrimination between these entirely distinct things, **SLAVEHOLDING AND THE SLAVE-LAWS**, we firmly believe is the cause of a great part of the difference of sentiment which exists on this subject. We have already adverted to one source of this confusion when speaking of the nature of property. The abolitionists constantly assume that the incidents of the right of property are the same whatever may be the nature of its object. Hence they infer that if one man may justly hold another man as property, he may justly treat him as he may treat any other article of property; if the validity of the title be acknowledged, it follows that the owner may disregard the nature of his slave, treat him as if he were not a husband, or not a parent; as though he had no social affections; or was not a rational being, and had no soul to be saved or lost. This is what they mean to condemn, and this every good man in the world would condemn; and if this was a correct view of what is meant by the right of property in man, there could be no diversity of opinion as to whether slaveholding were a heinous crime. Again, they constantly confound what a man has a right to do in virtue of his relation of master, with what the laws of the land give him the liberty to do, or even enjoin upon him. Thus the Reviewer above quoted, argues that if the apostles recognised slaveholding under the Roman laws as consistent with a Christian character, they must have recognised as consistent with that character, all the oppressions, cruelty, and even murder, which those laws sanctioned or permitted. "The Roman law," he says, "allowed masters to put their slaves to death; to extort testimony

on the rack ; to punish them with dreadful tortures ; to turn out the old slaves to die on a dunghill, &c. Might the Christian master claim and exercise all these legal rights ? The Roman law said, *Inter servos et liberos matrimonium contrahi non potest, contubernium potest*. A freeman may live with a slave, but not marry her. Was this legal fornication tolerated in the church ? He might have gone further, and said that the Roman law recognised no marriage between slaves, and then ask, whether the apostles recognised this prohibition of matrimony ? If we understand this argument, it is, that if the apostles recognised the right of a Christian under the Roman laws to hold slaves, they thereby recognised his right to expose his slaves to die of cold and hunger, to torture them at pleasure, to forbid them to marry, or to regard their union as mere temporary concubinage. If this is a valid mode of reasoning, then the Bible, in recognising the right of kings to reign, recognised their right to throw good men to lions, or into a furnace, to persecute them for worshipping the true God, and to do all the abominable things human laws have ever permitted kings to do. Then, too, if the Bible recognises the parental relation, it recognises the right of the parent to sell his daughters as concubines, to put his children to death, or to do whatever the laws of Moham-medans or Pagans may authorize a parent's doing. One would think that the distinction between the lawfulness of a given relation, as between a king and his subjects, a parent and his children, a master and his slaves, and the laws which at any particular time or place may be enacted in reference to that relation, is sufficiently clear, to prevent the two things from being confounded. Yet this is a distinction that abolitionists will not make. When they speak of slaveholding as a sin, they mean that it is a sin to do what the slave-laws of the south permit to be done ; to separate parents and children, or husbands and wives ; to treat slaves with injustice and cruelty ; to prevent their learning to read the word of God, or attending the preaching of the gospel. And when any man asserts that slaveholding is not a crime, they consider him as saying that it is not a sin thus to trample on the dearest rights of our fellow men. The very title of the book to which we have so often referred, is, "A Review of Dr. Junkin's Synodical Speech in defence of American Slavery." Dr. Junkin's speech, however, is simply an argument to prove that slaveholding is not a crime, and therefore that "believing masters ought not to be excommunicated from the church of God." This is called a defence of American Slavery ! i. e. of the whole system of slave-laws now in force in this country ! There is no help for men who will act thus. May not a man in England maintain that landholding is no sin, without defending all the English laws of entail and primogeniture, which relate to lands ? May he not teach that it is right to hold property, without thereby teaching that all the laws relating to property, in any given country, are wise and just ? Then why may he not say, that slaveholding is no crime, and yet not defend the slave-laws

either of Rome or America? This distinction, which is so plain as to be glaring, it is of great importance should be borne in mind both in the North and South. In the North, to prevent the sin and folly of condemning all slaveholders as criminals, when the slave laws are the real objects meant to be condemned; and in the South, to prevent those who maintain that slaveholding is no sin, from thinking it necessary to defend, and from expecting others to defend the existing laws in relation to that subject.

We utterly repudiate the charge that we are the advocates of the slave-laws of the South, because we hold that slaveholding is not in itself a crime. We deny that such a charge is sustained by anything we have said; we deny that southern Christians even defend the laws which are now in force with regard to the slaves. We know, for example, that the law which forbids slaves being taught to read, is in a multitude of cases openly disregarded. Within ten days a gentleman from South Carolina told us that every slave that he had could both read and write, and that he never gave himself the least concern about the law which forbids the instruction of the blacks. To show how unreasonable is the clamour of abolitionists against those who oppose their distinctive doctrine, we will again briefly state what we conceive to be the correct view of the subject.

By slaveholding we understand one man's having the right of property in another man; and by the right of property we understand the right of having and using a thing according to its nature; and consequently the right of property in a man can be nothing more than the right to use him as a man. And as a man is not only a sentient creature, but a social, rational, moral and immortal being, it is not an incident of the right of property in him, that his wants as a social and rational being can be justly disregarded, any more than it is an incident of right of property in a horse, that the wants of the horse as a living animal can be justly neglected. On the contrary, as the possession of rights implies corresponding duties, the possession of property in a man imposes the responsibility of providing for his wants as a man. And as the wants of a man relate to the soul as well as to the body, the responsibility not only rests upon the owner, but arises out of the very nature of his relation to his slaves as their owner, to provide not merely for their comfortable support, but also for their education, for the secure exercise of their social affections as husbands and fathers; and for their moral and religious instruction. These are as plainly the incidents of the right of property in man, as the duty of support, education, and moral and religious culture, is an incident of a parent's relation to his children. So far, therefore, from maintaining that a master has a right in virtue of his ownership to prevent his slaves marrying, or to separate them when married, or to keep them in ignorance, or to debar them from the means of grace, we say that it of necessity flows from his right of property in them, that he has no right to do any of these things, but is bound to do

the direct reverse. It is here as in despotic governments. So far from the possession by one man of absolute power in the state, giving him the right to interfere with the religious convictions of his people, to keep them in ignorance, to separate the married, to take children from their parents, or in any way to hinder the social, intellectual, and religious improvement of those subject to his power, the very possession of that power imposes the strongest obligation to do all he can for their happiness and improvement.

Again, as the possession of power over our fellow-men necessarily involves corresponding duties towards them, so the exercise of that power is to be regulated by the law of God. A king is bound to exercise his power according to the rules of justice and mercy; a parent must use his authority for edification and not for destruction; and a master's power over the slave is in like manner subject to the rules of God's word. And as it is one of the rules there laid down, that labour should be rewarded, it is no fair inference from the admission of the right of possession in the master, that he may justly withhold a reasonable compensation for the labour of his slaves. And in point of fact, we believe it to be true, that the slaves of the south, as a general rule, are far better compensated than the great body of operatives in Europe. We believe also that taking them as a class, their intellectual, moral, and religious condition is better. It is not well, however, to recriminate. Americans doubtless have sinned and are now sinning greatly, in not discharging the duties which flow from their relation to the coloured people of this country as their masters; and this sin is not the less, because England has sinned and is still sinning in a higher measure, in her conduct towards her labouring population. The degradation, social and moral, into which large masses of the people have there been allowed to sink, we cannot but regard as the natural consequence of unequal laws; of laws which favour the accumulation of property in the hands of a few, and which tend to confine the benefits of education and religious privileges to the upper and middle classes. The Archbishop of Canterbury stated in the House of Lords, that there were three millions of people in England and Wales without pastoral supervision, and that church accommodation was provided for one in eight of the population, in some parts of the country, and for one in thirty in other parts. The Marquis of Lansdowne, on another occasion, stated that, with the exception of Spain and Russia, England was in education below any European nation, only one in twelve of the population being in school. A public report recently made to parliament, states that there are nearly three millions and a half of the people of Ireland living in mud hovels, having one room each, and without chimney or windows. While the mass of the population is sinking to such degradation, property is accumulating with fearful rapidity in the hands of a constantly decreasing number. In 1770 the lands of England belonged to 250,000 families; in 1815, they belonged to

\$2,000, and since then the process has been going on as rapidly as ever.* In 1838 it appeared from the probate of wills that the personal property of twenty-four bishops, who had died within twenty years, averaged about \$300,000 each. This is exclusive of their real estates. If the eye had the power of retroversion, we should certainly be less censorious. The laws of England by which such inequality has been produced in the distribution of wealth, and such ignorance and misery entailed on the lower classes, are to Americans as much the objects of moral disapprobation, as anything in our institutions can be to the good people of England. And yet we hear of no public meetings to recommend discontinuing the use of the products of English labour, analogous to those which in Great Britain recommend, under the patronage of that very eccentric person Dr. Burns, the non-importation of American cotton. This however is a digression which we should be willing to strike out, but are also willing to let stand. We do not approve of this mutual condemnation, and only adduce the foregoing facts to show how unbecoming it appears in the eyes of Americans, for men surrounded by such crying evils at home, to exhaust their benevolence on distant objects.

As, then, the right of property in a man, while it invests the owner with power to command his services, does not exempt him from the obligation to exercise that power according to the directions of God's word, the master therefore is bound by the principle that the labourer is worthy of his hire. And the right to accumulate property necessarily follows from the right to compensation, for a man's hire is his own, and if it exceeds the necessary means of support, it is his own still. This right is generally recognised. How else could slaves purchase their own liberty, as they are allowed to do under Spanish laws, and as they so often in fact do in this country?

It follows necessarily, from what has been said, that all those laws which are designed to restrict the master in the discharge of the duties which flow from his relation to his slaves; which forbid his teaching them to read, or which prohibit marriage among them, or which allow of the separation of those who are married, or which render insecure the possession of their earnings, or are otherwise in conflict with the word of God, are wicked laws; laws which do not find their justification in the admission of the right of ownership in the master, but are in direct contravention of the obligations which necessarily flow from that right. If the laws of the land forbade parents to instruct their children, or permitted them to sell them to the Turks, there would be a general outcry against the atrocity of such laws; but no man would be so absurd as to infer that having children was a great sin. Parents who complied with such laws would be great sinners, but not parents who did their duty to their children. In all other cases,

* Edinburgh Witness, Feb. 3, 1844.

men distinguish between the relation, whether of kings and subjects, of lords and tenants, of parents and children, and the laws, just or unjust, which may be made respecting those relations. If they would make the same distinction between slaveholding and the slave-laws, they would see that the condemnation of the latter does not necessarily involve the condemnation of the former as itself a crime.

The principles above stated we believe to be scriptural, and in accordance with the enlightened moral sense of men. We believe them also to be eminently conducive to the welfare of the slaves. The principles and conduct, on the other hand, of our abolitionists, we believe to be unchristian and in the highest degree injurious. If their distinctive doctrine is erroneous, then denouncing slaveholders as such, excluding them from the church, insisting on immediate emancipation as in all cases a duty, are all seen and felt to be unreasonable; and the spirit with which this course is pursued, to be unchristian. The consequence is, that opposition and alienation are produced between those who ought to be united; slaveholders, who do not belong to the church, are exasperated, and become more severe in the treatment of their slaves, more intolerant of all means for their improvement, and the hands of God's people living among them are effectually tied. As the cause of temperance was disparaged, weakened, and in some places ruined, by making all use of intoxicating drinks sinful; so the cause of the slave has been injured beyond estimate, by the doctrine that slaveholding is itself a crime, and by the spirit and measures to which that doctrine has given rise.

Any candid man can see, on the other hand, that the scriptural doctrine is adapted to promote the best interests of the slaves. That doctrine is that slaveholding is not necessarily sinful, but like all similar relations is right or wrong according to circumstances, and when it exists gives rise to the obligation of providing for all the temporal and spiritual wants of the slaves. If a man owns another, he is for that very reason bound to feed and clothe him, to provide for him in sickness and old age, to educate him, and let the light of truth and saving knowledge in upon his mind, to watch over his rights, to exercise all the power which his ownership gives him in accordance with those rules of mercy and righteousness, which are laid down in the word of God. It is also evident that acting in accordance with these principles would soon so improve the condition of the slaves, would make them intelligent, moral and religious, and thus work out to the benefit of all concerned, and the removal of the institution. For slavery, like despotism, supposes the actual inferiority, and consequent dependence of those held in subjection. Neither can be permanent. Both may be prolonged by keeping the subject class degraded, that is, by committing sin on a large scale, which is only to treasure up wrath for the day of wrath. It is only the antagonist fanaticism of a fragment of the south, which maintains the doctrine that

slavery is in itself a good thing, and ought to be perpetuated. It cannot by possibility be perpetuated. The only question is, how is it to end? All that we are concerned with, is present duty; and that duty, inferred from the nature of the relation, and declared in the word of God, is to instruct, to civilize, to evangelize the slaves, to make them as far as we can, intelligent, moral and religious; good husbands, good fathers, as well as good servants. The consequence of such conduct must be peace, a good conscience, and the blessing of God.

If the views presented in this paper are correct, it is easy to see how this whole subject ought to be treated in our church courts. In the first place it is plain, that for such courts, under the dictation of abolitionists, to pronounce slaveholding a crime, and to enjoin the exclusion of all slaveholders from the church, would be foolish and wicked. It would be to trample on the authority of the word of God; to shock the moral sense of the great body of intelligent and pious people on the face of the earth; it would rend the church, send abroad a spirit of malice and discord, and would cut off the slaves themselves from one of the most important means appointed by God for their improvement and emancipation; the instructions and kind treatment of believing masters.

In the second place, it is plain that the church has no responsibility and no right to interfere, with respect to the slave laws of the South. Those laws are doubtless in many cases unjust and cruel, enjoining what God forbids, and forbidding what God enjoins. The existence of those laws supposes criminality somewhere; but the responsibility rests on those who made, and have the power to repeal them. It does not rest on the church. Christians who are members of communities in which such laws are in force, have their share of responsibility with regard to them, as citizens. But it is no part of the vocation of the church, as such, to interfere with civil laws. The apostles did not call a synod at Jerusalem, to denounce the Roman laws, but they laid the foundation of a spiritual society, and let the world make its own laws. We would not brook the legislatures of our States passing denunciatory resolutions against our rules of church discipline; and we should not call upon the church to meddle with the laws of the land. As citizens we have the right and duty to demand just and equal laws; but as a church, we have other and higher duties.

In the third place, it is evident that the church has an important duty to perform in relation to this subject. At the North, as elsewhere, she is bound to instruct parents in their duties to their children, and to exercise her oversight and discipline when those duties are grossly violated or neglected. She has the same duty to perform with regard to slaveholders. As she would be called upon to censure a parent, who was unjust or cruel to his children, so is she called upon to censure her slaveholding members, should they be unjust or cruel to their slaves. The church is a society constituted by God, to be governed by certain rules, and invested

with power to enforce, by spiritual means, the observance of those rules upon its members. Of course those who do not comply with the rules laid down in the word of God, as to their conduct, either as men, or parents, or masters, are justly exposed to the censure of the church, and the church is bound to inflict such censure. As to this point, we presume there is no difference of opinion. And if we could agree to act on these principles; that is, abstain from denouncing as a crime what God has not so pronounced; withhold our hands from the laws of the land, for which, as a church, we have no responsibility; and confine ourselves to teaching all classes of our members their duties, whether as parents, masters, or slaves, and enforcing the discharge of those duties by the power which God hath given to his church for edification and not for destruction, we should commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.